



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed Friday, Sept. 21, 2012, as "POW/MIA Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who fought bravely for our freedoms.

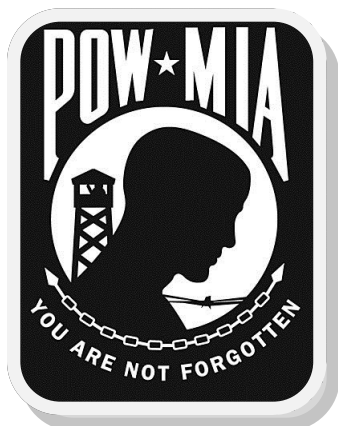
"While we are grateful to all of those who have served our nation, the 21<sup>st</sup> of September should be a day we pay special honor to those who, because of their service, have become prisoners of war or are Missing in Action," the Governor said.

The state of South Dakota continues to support efforts to account for every service member classified as Missing in Action, he said.

"Sept. 21 is a day for all us to remember that freedom is not free. It comes with a price tag," Gov. Daugaard said.

The Governor encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on Sept. 21 to honor the POW/MIA's who fought to protect our freedoms and lost theirs, as well as remember those engaged in today's struggle to protect our freedoms for future generations.

"Let us never forget those who have served and are currently serving our nation's armed services," added Steve Harding, Deputy Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Sept. 21 affords us a great opportunity to reaffirm our pledge to never stop searching and never stop thinking of our lost warriors and their families."



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## HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR WORLD WAR II, KOREAN AND VIETNAM VETERANS

Military veterans who served on active duty at any time during World War II, or the Korean or Vietnam Wars and did not complete their high school education are eligible, per SDCL 33A-2-34, to receive an honorary diploma from the high school of their choice.

Eligible veterans include anyone who served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States at any time during the periods: December 7, 1941 to September 2, 1945; June 25, 1950 to July 31, 1953; or February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975.

Veterans interested in receiving an honorary diploma should contact their local County/Tribal Veterans Service Officer for assistance in obtaining their diploma.



## DAV DONATES FOUR NEW VANS FOR VETERANS TRANSPORTATION

After more than 600,000 miles of driving veterans to and from their appointments at the VA Black Hills Health Care Center (VABHHCS), the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) has retired four vans and commissioned four new ones.

The DAV service organization has partnered with VA's throughout the country since 1973, to ease the obstacle of transportation for veterans seeking care through their assigned VA Medical Center. Vans are purchased by donations from veterans service organizations and community donations, along with matching funds from the DAV Columbia Trust Fund.

These four vans will replace the vans that have previously served veterans in Winner, Pierre, and Rosebud, South Dakota, and Scottsbluff, Neb. For DAV Chapters in western South Dakota and Nebraska, this is merely the continuation of the tradition that began in 1973, with the purchase of the first ever DAV van in Pierre.

More than 80 VABHHCS volunteers provide transportation to an average of 800 Veteran's each month, and drive an average of 35,000 miles each month.



## OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE RECEIVES GRANT FOR NEW VETERANS CEMETERY

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced they have awarded a grant in the amount of \$6,510,800 for 100 percent of allowable costs associated with the establishment of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Veterans Cemetery. The cemetery will be located in Kyle, South Dakota.

Eric Shinseki, Secretary of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, announced that this grant will fund the construction of a main entrance, a combined administration/maintenance building, roads, an assembly area, a committal shelter, pre-placed crypts, cremain burial areas, landscaping, a memorial walkway and supporting infrastructure. The project will develop 15.2 acres and will include the construction of 360 pre-placed crypts and 40 cremain gravesites.



## OGLALA LAKOTA NATION

## 842ND RETURNS FROM AFGHANISTAN

One hundred and sixty Soldiers from the South Dakota Army National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company arrived at Fort Bliss, Texas, Monday after completing a year-long deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Members of the 842nd will spend about a week or longer at Fort Bliss completing demobilization requirements before returning to South Dakota.

The Spearfish, Belle Fourche and Sturgis-based unit deployed in September 2011 with a mission to provide horizontal construction and engineering support. Equipped with bulldozers, scrapers, cranes, loaders and 20-ton dump trucks, the unit built and maintained roads, constructed base force protection measures and provided limited clearing operations.

Details of the unit's arrival home will be made available to the public as soon as they are confirmed.





## MAKING SENSE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

"Making Sense of the American Civil War," a series of three scholar-led discussions, will be held at the Cultural Heritage Center (900 Governors Drive) in Pierre on Oct. 11 and 20, and Nov. 4.

At each session, the conversation will focus on a different facet of the Civil War experience, using one or more common texts as the foundation for the discussion. Discussion leaders will be Brad Tennant, associate professor of history at Presentation College in Aberdeen, and Donovan Sprague, a professor at Black Hills State University in Spearfish.

Books to be discussed are "March" by Geraldine Brooks, "Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam" by James McPherson, and "America's War: Talking About the Civil War and Emancipation on Their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries," edited by Edward L. Ayers. Also included will be a booklet of readings compiled by Tennant and Sprague focusing on events that occurred in Dakota Territory and the surrounding region during the Civil War period.

Readers may sign out and borrow the books from the Cultural Heritage Center. The books are available in the Administration Office from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. CST on weekdays, and at the front desk on weekends.

Summaries of each session are:

- Thursday, Oct. 11, 7 p.m. – the discussion will center on the booklet of readings focusing on the Civil War period on the Northern Plains. Both Tennant and Sprague will serve as discussion leaders.
- Saturday, Oct. 20, 10:30 a.m. – the second discussion will be on Ayers' "America's War," especially sections 2 and 5, with Tennant as discussion leader.
- Sunday, Nov. 4, 2 p.m. – Tennant will lead the discussion of "March" and "Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam."

For more information on the series at the Cultural Heritage Center, please call (605) 773-6011. The series is presented by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Library Association's Public Programs Office and coordinated through the efforts the South Dakota Humanities Council in collaboration with the South Dakota State Library

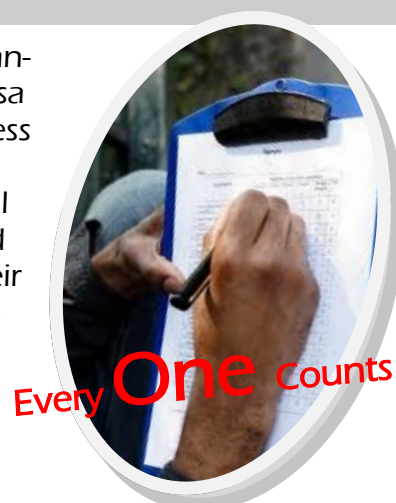


## SD ANNUAL HOMELESS COUNT

The South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium will hold its annual statewide count of homeless people next week. State coordinator Lisa Bondy says the goal of the Sept. 25 count is to make contact with homeless people and see what help they need.

This year's count also will continue to focus on reaching the more rural areas of South Dakota. Bondy says volunteers are trained, teamed up and given the supplies and information necessary to conduct the count in their neighborhoods, communities or counties. The statewide survey is broken down into three geographical areas - West River, East River and central South Dakota.

The 2011 count found 1,453 homeless people in South Dakota. While 369 were women, 707 were men and 377 were children.



## UNACCOMPANIED VETERANS MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Black Hills National Cemetery will hold an "Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial" service on Monday, October 1, 2012. The Memorial Service will be held at 9:00 am at the BHNC (20901 Pleasant Valley Drive) in Sturgis.

The ceremony is a brief military committal for any veteran who arrived alone and was buried or cremated without a proper military ceremony. The names, rank and branch of service and hometown of the deceased are read aloud.

All 125 national cemeteries do something to recognize veterans buried without family present.

On average 40-50 veterans are buried unaccompanied at BHNC every year.

It is important that we remember our "Fallen Heroes" who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.



### MEMORIAL SERVICE

**Black Hills National Cemetery**

**Monday, October 1, 2012—at 9:00 am**



## ROSEBUD VETERANS CEMETERY PROGRESSING

A September 18 story in the Rapid City Journal notes that the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Veterans Cemetery is ahead of construction schedule.

The Rosebud cemetery project includes 600 sites for crypt burials, 544 traditional burial plots and 32 columbarium sites. Several elements of Lakota design will be incorporated into the cemetery gathering place.

Here is the link to the complete story [http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/rosebud-cemetery-set-for-early-completion/article\\_db130768-8f1b-53ed-8203-616d1bf7fa02.html](http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/rosebud-cemetery-set-for-early-completion/article_db130768-8f1b-53ed-8203-616d1bf7fa02.html)

## SD RECEIVES GRANT FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced this week the award of \$1,064,888 in grant money to Volunteers of America Dakotas, one of 38 projects around the country that will provide temporary housing to formerly homeless veterans with the goal that they will retain the residence as their own.

"As we drive toward our goal to end homelessness among veterans in 2015, the VA continues to find innovative ways to permanently house veterans who were formerly homeless," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Under President Obama's leadership, we have made incredible strides in creating programs to aid these brave men and women who have served our Nation so well."

The grant to Volunteers of America Dakotas will be used to provide a daily average of 25 beds for homeless veterans to promote increased housing stabilization. Housing will be provided at 4008 S. Louise Avenue; 4213 E. 12<sup>th</sup> St.; and 3105 E. 11<sup>th</sup> St., Sioux Falls, SD.

The grants were awarded through a special program that gives veterans the opportunity to take over payment of a lease instead of moving out after leaving certain VA programs, such as substance use counseling, mental health services, or job training. Usually, VA programs require veterans living in transitional housing to move out after 24 months.

Called the "Transition in Place" model, it helps close the gaps in available housing for the nation's most vulnerable homeless veterans, including women with children, Indian tribal populations, and veterans with substance use and mental health problems.

"Securing permanent housing is a vital step in the journey of our homeless veterans," said Dr. Susan Angell, executive director for the VA's Veterans Homeless Initiative. "This is the last piece of the puzzle. It is crucial for them in continuing to lead independent lives."

Under the program, funds go to community-based programs that provide homeless veterans with support services and housing.

Lisa Pape, national director of homeless programs for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which oversees VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD), said VHA's focus is creating and strengthening community services around the country so that homeless veterans get the support they need.

"Our focus is creating a team of community support – pairing a variety of services, such as mental health support, employment assistance and job training – with the essential component of housing," said Lisa Pape, national director of homeless programs for the VA's health care system, which oversees the program.

On a single night in 2011, a national count of homeless veterans totaled 67,495, 12 percent lower than 76,000 in 2010. As part of Obama and Shinseki's five-year plan to eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015, the VA has committed almost \$1 billion to strengthen programs that prevent and treat the many issues that can lead to veteran homelessness.

To help a homeless veteran or veteran at risk of homelessness, refer them to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, 1-877-4AID-VET, or direct them to [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). The hotline connects homeless veterans, veterans at risk of becoming homeless and their families with the VA services and benefits they have earned.





## ELECTION DAY INFORMATION FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL SERVING OVERSEAS

South Dakota Secretary of State Jason Gant wants to remind military and overseas voters that they have options regarding casting a ballot in the Nov. 6 General Election.

"Uniformed servicemen and servicewomen give so much to protect the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States and residents of South Dakota," Gant said. "The least we can do in return is to make it as easy as possible for them to have their voices heard come Election Day."

Gant recommends that military voters visit the Military and Overseas Citizens section of [sdsos.gov](http://sdsos.gov) for specific step-by-step instructions about how to vote absentee. Those with questions about the process may also contact their County Auditors, who serve as local elections officials, or the Secretary of State's office at (605) 773-3537 or [sdsos@state.sd.us](mailto:sdsos@state.sd.us) for additional information.

Absentee voting requires submission of an application for an absentee ballot, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 paved the way for applications to be transmitted to military and overseas citizens via fax, e-mail or postal mail. If the application is for a Primary, General or other statewide election, uniformed and overseas voters may request to have their ballots sent to them electronically.

Ballots cannot be marked or returned electronically, but having them sent to military and overseas voters via a secure Internet connection saves considerable time over mail, greatly improving the chances that voted ballots will be returned to County Auditors by Election Day.

Absentee voting begins 46 days prior to an election, so Sept. 21 for the Nov. 6 General Election. In South Dakota, elections officials must receive applications for absentee ballots no later than 3 p.m. on Election Day.

For more information, visit the Secretary of State's Website at::

<http://sdsos.gov/content/viewcontent.aspx?cat=elections&pg=/elections/deployed.shtm>



## RETURNING SOLDIERS GET HELP

Many soldiers return home only to begin the new battle of putting their life back together. The Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Program staff for the VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) is dedicated to helping these soldiers get the health care and assistance they've earned.

With the help of many VABHHCS employees, Lori Vosika, OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager, orchestrated the event "Soldier Days" to help these returning soldiers get their VA health care started. The goal of this event was to provide soldiers with access and same-day-service, to minimize their absence from home, family, work and school.

Vosika noticed that a large portion of a returning Army National Guard Unit, the 200<sup>th</sup> Engineering Unit headquartered in Pierre, S.D., contained veterans that would be eligible for care at VABHHCS, but lived in central South Dakota. These returning soldiers would be living up to four hours away from the Fort Meade VA Medical Center. Vosika knew they would be busy integrating back into civilian life and may not have time to make several trips across the state for medical care.

"We identified geographically where our soldiers were coming from and we decided how best to get them here," Vosika said. "We ended up incorporating returning soldiers from the 200<sup>th</sup>, 139<sup>th</sup> and 189<sup>th</sup> SD Army National Guard Units."

"The idea was to get all the business stuff out of the way, except for ID cards, so that when the soldiers arrived, it could be a one-stop-shopping health care extravaganza," Vosika said.

After much planning and preparation, VABHHCS hosted four Soldier Days events, in July and August. Immediately following the first Soldier Days event they began hearing positive feedback.

At each Soldier Day event the soldiers arrive to a checklist of pre-scheduled appointments, some of which came by way of a health care screener at the Yellow Ribbon Events. Each soldier was then assigned an ambassador to help them find their way around the facility and to their appointments. The ambassadors included volunteers from local service organizations.

At Soldier Days, returning soldiers were able to see health care professionals in primary care, women's health, dental and vision. Diagnostics of x-ray, lab and MRI, and specialists of orthopedics, physical and occupational therapy, audiology, behavioral/mental health and traumatic brain injury team stood ready to provide same day service. Each Soldier Days event also included breakfast, lunch and snacks provided by Veteran Service Organizations, the American Red Cross and VABHHCS Nutrition and Food Service.

Throughout the four Soldier Days events, 62 soldiers attended and received same-day health care appointments across many specialty areas.

If you have questions about Soldier Days, please contact Lori Vosika at 605-745-2000, ext. 92176.





# Upcoming Events

Sept. 21—Stand Down—Sioux Falls - VFW— 3601 S. Minnesota Ave. (9:00 am—3:00 pm)  
Sept 21—POW MIA DAY  
Sept. 22—SDNGEA Veterans March—Northern Black Hills  
Sept. 25—Stand Down—Aberdeen Civic Center—203 S. Washington (2:00 pm—7:00 pm)  
Sept. 25 Pierre Homeless Connect  
Sept. 26—Women Veterans Stand Down—Sturgis Armory (Junction Ave /Main St) 2:00 pm—6:00 pm  
Sept. 30—Gold Star Mothers Day  
Oct. 1—Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—Black Hills National Cemetery—9:00 am  
Oct. 19—SFVAHCS Women Veterans Conference—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre (100 W. 8th Street) - 8:00 am—2:45 pm  
Oct. 19—SFVAHCS Flu Shot Clinic—Wagner CBOC—12:30 pm—4:30 pm  
Oct. 22—SFVAHCS Flu Shot Clinic—Watertown CBOC—8:30 am—4:00 pm  
Oct. 23—SFVAHCS Flu Shot Clinic—Watertown CBOC—8:30 am—4:00 pm  
Oct. 23—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV—Sioux Falls—10:30 am  
Oct. 26—SFVAHCS Flu Shot Clinic—Wagner CBOC—12:30 pm—4:30 pm  
Oct 23—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV—Sioux Falls—10:30 am  
Nov. 1—SFVAHCS Flu Shot Clinic—Watertown CBOC—8:30 am—4:30 pm  
Nov. 11—Veterans Day  
Nov. 12—Veterans Day Regional Site Program—Riggs High School Theatre—Pierre—10:45 am  
Dec. 8—Wreaths Across America

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/South-Dakota-Department-of-Military-and-Veterans-Affairs/156424074389725>

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer  
South Dakota Department of the Military  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Soldiers and Sailors Building  
425 E Capitol Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501  
Phone: 605-773-8242  
E-mail address: [audry.ricketts@state.sd.us](mailto:audry.ricketts@state.sd.us)  
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

